

The next photograph is typical of the property damage. This is in my hometown of Cranston. Notice the sign: "Give this land back to the river."

The river decided for a moment to reclaim it. This is the result of the surface flooding and the subsurface water coming up. This looks like the entire inside of the home has been destroyed and removed. Here is a hot water heater, a toilet. Although the house is standing, what is inside is basically a shell. This is a homeowner who now has to rebuild their house, essentially, and replace water heaters, toilets. One of the issues we have is that in some of these areas, because of the subsurface flooding, they are not a flood zone. Unless they have recently borrowed money on a mortgage, there is probably little requirement for them to have flood insurance. Typically, in these communities, the houses have been occupied for 20, 30, 40 years by one family. They have either paid off the mortgage or they don't require flood insurance. So many people, frankly, don't have flood insurance. Then, of course, there is going to be wrangling with the insurance companies because, in some cases, where it was just subsurface water, that does not fit their definition of a flood. So depending on your policy, or if you have coverage, there are thousands of homes in Rhode Island that are significantly damaged. The owner has no resources to rebuild unless he gets some assistance. Again, FEMA has been very good for temporary assistance, but we have to look more long term.

Finally, this is Hopkinton, RI, which is part of our rural area in the west. This photo shows the scope of the flooding there. This structure is totally surrounded by water. I was in other parts of this area, in another community, Charlestown. There was a bridge that was closed. As you walked across the bridge on the other side, because of the water moving under the ground, it looked as if someone had dropped a 500-pound bomb. It was a huge crater. Now the town has to rebuild the bridge. Of course, they don't have the money to do so.

All this is indicative of the situation in Rhode Island. A further point. This photograph was taken a week after the flooding. Notice it is sunny. This is a week after the flooding. These owners couldn't even get to their building after a week. This could have been worse in this particular locale because farther upstream there is a dam, the Alton dam. It was overtopped and the waters were going over it. There was so much concern that it was in danger of collapsing that there was an emergency evacuation order for the town of Westerly, which is a sizable community to the south on the coast. They were afraid the dam would give and a major metropolitan area, in Rhode Island terms, would be engulfed with water. Luckily the dam held, and the damage was significant but restricted to flooding along the Pawcatuck.

Within the context of jobs, too, several of our facilities and factories were knocked out. Bradford Printing and Finishing has already let go of its employees. They were underwater. They are still trying to literally get back to work. It has been closed for cleanup. Again, workers are on the street, not because they don't have demand for their product. It is because they can't get to the machines where they are flooded. Another company in northern Rhode Island, along the Blackstone River, Hope Global, an extraordinary CEO Cheryl Merchant, they were flooded in 2005. I was there. I had to take a boat into their factory. This time, in anticipation, they literally lifted the equipment. This is a major producer of OEM for the auto industry, webbing and belts, seatbelts, et cetera. They pushed up all that heavy equipment. The water came in, but it didn't reach the equipment. They are back in production, but the preparations and the cleanup are about \$1 million. It is hard for the manager of the plant to explain to the board of directors why they are going to spend \$1 million every 5 years just to keep the equipment dry.

We have to do something in terms of mitigation. Even in the best times, FEMA would have been necessary. But we are in a very difficult situation. The State is, as we speak, trying to fill a \$220 million shortfall in this year's budget. Again, this is a State where \$220 million is a significant part of the budget. It is not a rounding error. They are already anticipating a \$400 million shortfall next year in the 2011 budget. The bond rating has been lowered once in the last several weeks. It may be lowered again, if this economic distress and this flood damage can't be, in some way, mitigated and supported in terms of cleanup or reconstruction.

Frankly, my constituents know—and we all have seen similar scenes of flooding from the Midwest, from the Southwest, from the Central part of America—every time, at least in my recollection, this Senate has stood and provided support for those communities.

I have supported emergency expenditures for flooding in communities elsewhere in the country, except really up in Rhode Island because we have never had an experience before of this nature, of this size, of this scope. They, frankly, do not begrudge the aid because, as I sense and as my colleagues and constituents sense, someday we might be in that position where we are going to have to ask for it. Well, we are in that position right now. So for everyone who has been here—and it is a significant number—and asked on behalf of their constituents for help because of a devastating flood, I am joining those ranks. We will have an opportunity, I hope, in the appropriations process through the supplementals to provide additional assistance to the State of Rhode Island, for my constituents to deal with this situation, both the economic distress and the physical damage from this flooding.

So, Madam President, I again thank you for the opportunity to talk about what happened, and I will be back again because, as we have responded to the needs of other parts of the country, we ask that we be given the same treatment.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REUTERS INVESTIGATION OF WELLPPOINT

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, earlier today my staff brought to my attention an article that had just come out on Reuters. I read it and felt an outrage and dismay and decided I was going to come to the floor and speak about it.

Today, an investigative story published by Reuters details how WellPoint, a medical insurance company—as a matter of fact, the Nation's largest health insurance company, with 33.7 million policyholders—used a special computer program to systematically identify women with breast cancer and target their health policies for termination—in other words, an effort to specifically target women with breast cancer and then drop their health insurance. I would like to ask every American to read this jaw-dropping story. Instead of providing the health care for which these seriously ill women have paid, WellPoint subjected these paying customers to investigations that ended with WellPoint's administrative bureaucrats canceling their insurance policies at their time of greatest need.

Under attack by both cancer and WellPoint, these women were left ailing, disabled, and broke. Let me give you a few examples.

Yenny Hsu, a woman from Los Angeles, was kicked off of her insurance policy after a breast cancer diagnosis because WellPoint said she failed to disclose that she had been exposed to hepatitis B as a child. Now, that has nothing to do with breast cancer, but it did not stop WellPoint from terminating her coverage.

In Texas, a woman named Robin Beaton was forced to delay lifesaving surgery because WellPoint decided to investigate whether she had failed to disclose a serious illness. The serious illness in question was a case of acne. WellPoint delayed her surgery for 5 months, causing the size of the cancerous mass in her breast to triple. By the time they finally dropped their investigation, she needed a radical double mastectomy.